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SUBJECT: STAFFDEL ALMEIDA, GUATEMALA VISIT DECEMBER 14-17

REF: A. STATE 128284

[B.](#) GUATE 1510

[C.](#) GUATEMALA 522

[D.](#) GUATEMALA 974

[¶1.](#) Labor Counsel to the U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor, Tico Almeida, visited Guatemala December 14-17 as part of a two-country fact-finding visit to Central America to discuss labor issues within the jurisdiction of his Committee. The trip was scheduled for the week after the Department of Labor's planned December 12 release of its public report on the AFL-CIO CAFTA submission (Refs C, D). The purpose of the trip was to conduct Congressional oversight over DOL-funded projects in Guatemala, establish local contacts on labor issues for possible House Committee hearings in the coming year, and to gather information to provide the House Committee and its Chairman, George Miller (D-CA), with context for the upcoming DOL public report on the CAFTA submission.

[¶2.](#) During his three-day visit, Almeida met with senior GOG officials, labor inspectors, employers, union leaders and members, including representatives from the local unions that collaborated with the AFL-CIO to submit the CAFTA submission, labor federations, including the AFL-CIO Solidarity Center, members of civil society, and representatives of the International Labor Organization, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG).

[¶3.](#) Almeida discussed a variety of issues with his interlocutors, including alleged violations of Guatemalan labor laws, Guatemala's alleged non-compliance with certain ILO core labor standards, and violence against trade unionists and the lack of prosecution in these cases. Most interlocutors agreed that impunity in Guatemala has made the prosecution of cases of violence against unionists difficult. Almeida also floated the idea of re-negotiating Chapter 16 of the CAFTA-DR free trade agreement, to strengthen what he views as currently lax labor regulations, and discussed the possibility of providing funds to the U.S. Department of Justice to provide training to Guatemalan prosecutors and judges.

[¶4.](#) Almeida cleared this message prior to transmission.
McFarland